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OF HANCOCK COUNTY

Bay Saint Louis, Mississippi

January 2011

COMING EVENTS AT LOBRANO HOUSE

The monthly luncheon meeting will be held on Thursday, January 20, 2011, at noon at the Kate Lobrano House. Guest speaker for the program will be Michel Antoine Goitia-Nicolas of New Orleans, president of the Louisiana Basque Society and Cultural Organization. He will speak on the Basque connections of the families of the Mississippi Gulf Coast. Society members who have heard him speak remark that his talks are engrossing and stimulating. **Reservations are required** and may be made by calling 467-4090. Please call *by noon on Wednesday, January 19*, to make your reservation, to help us plan seating which is limited to forty-eight people, and to apprise us of the number for whom to prepare. The price of the lunch is \$10.00.



The Republic of West Florida

By
Eddie Coleman

With the Louisiana Purchase of 1803, it was assumed that the area known as West Florida was a part of the United States. However, Spain claimed the lands as her own. Ultimately in 1810, citizens of West Florida revolted from Spain and set up their own country known as the Republic of West Florida.

From most accounts the land was claimed by the United States, governed by the Spanish, and inhabited by the French and English with a sprinkling of other European settlers.

The treaty at the conclusion of the Seven Years' War (French and Indian War) in 1763 gave Britain the Spanish colony of Florida and other former French colonial lands of Louisiana and the Mississippi and Alabama Gulf Coasts. These were reorganized into the provinces of East Florida and West Florida. Essentially West Florida included the Florida Panhandle, the lower

MEMBERSHIP FEES

The 2011 Membership Drive is on! It's time for current members to renew their membership in the Historical Society and to encourage family and friends to join us too. The price of membership is twenty-five (\$25) per year. The date on your address label is your date of membership expiration.

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OF HANCOCK COUNTY

Eddie Coleman, Editor
Pat Fuchs, PublisherPublished monthly by the
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"heels" of Alabama and Mississippi, and the eastern portion of Louisiana roughly from Baton Rouge south to the mouth of the Mississippi River.

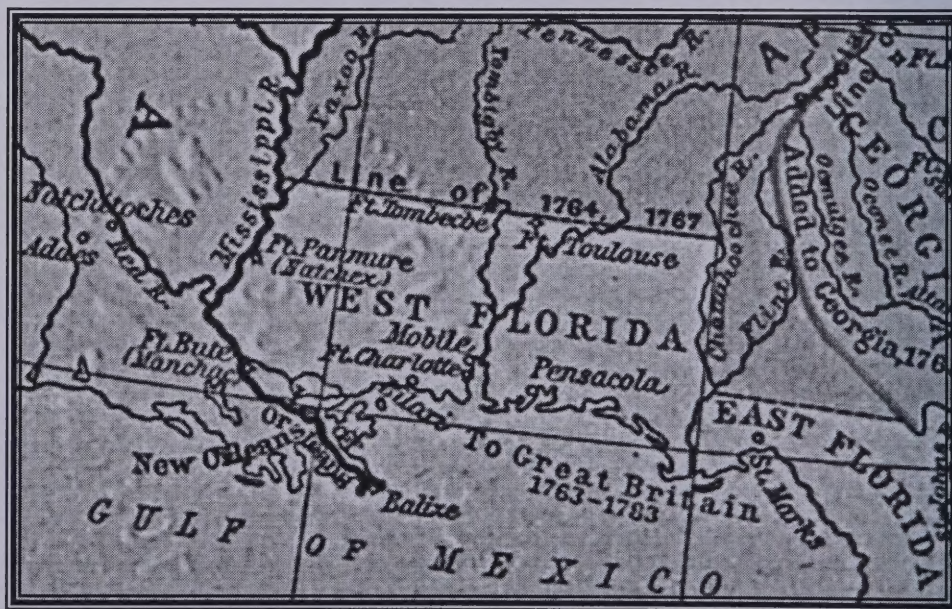
The new British lands brought many new settlers into the area who proved to be Loyalists during the American Revolution. The Treaty of Paris at the end of the war returned the lands of West Florida to Spain and reset the northern boundary to its original 31st parallel. But Spain wanted the northern boundary to be at 32 degrees 22 minutes north latitude instead. It was not until 1795 with the Treaty of Lorenzo that Spain recognized the border as the 31st parallel.

Another chapter in the story is that in 1800 Spain returned its Louisiana Colony to France with the secret Treaty of San Ildefonso. The transaction "muddied the waters" because with the Louisiana Purchase in 1803 the United States consid-

ered West Florida its property. Yet Spain also claimed it.

The Spanish letters of *The Lower Mississippi Data Base* give evidence of "stress" between the United States and Spain from 1805 to 1810. Various incidents and encounters between the two countries reveal that both claimed the area of West Florida and its adjacent waters of the Gulf of Mexico. Local historians Russell Guerin and Marco Giardino, Ph. D., have reviewed many of the letters in detail and made the following observation:

One such letter "dated August 5, 1808, described an action by four American gunboats that came to Cat Island. Their crew killed various cattle and other livestock belonging to [Pedro] Morin. Also, they went to Pass Christian where they killed a cow belonging to Jose Labat. In addition, the American captain of one vessel demanded



West Florida map of 1767

that a Spanish schooner submit to an inspection and was very angry when told he had no right in Spanish waters."

President James Madison followed Thomas Jefferson's belief that the area would eventually become a part of the United States. Even though the United States and Spain continued negotiations concerning the rightful owner of West Florida, tensions continued to rise with more American settlers moving into the area. The new inhabitants and earlier British settlers resented being under Spanish rule.

The idea of rebellion against Spain began to circulate among the populace. In fact in 1804 there had been an unsuccessful attempt by the Kemper brothers (Nathan, Reuben, and Samuel) of Pinckneyville, Mississippi Territory, to lead such a rebellion. According to Robert Higgs, Ph.D., the uprising failed mostly because "its leaders miscalculated the strength of pro-French, pro-British, and pro-Spanish elements, all of whom felt threatened by the pro-American faction the Kempers represented and, in part, because many residents recognized that the Kempers were not so much revolutionaries as opportunistic and unscrupulous marauders mouthing political slogans."

The establishment of the Republic of West Florida began on the night of September 22-23, 1810, when a group of "disgruntled settlers" from the Mississippi Territory, led by Philemon Thomas, attacked the Spanish fort at Baton Rouge. In

the melee two Spanish soldiers were killed, and five others, wounded. Later William Cooper, a staunch Spanish loyalist in the Baton Rouge area, was summarily murdered by these ruffians. Among those Mississippi settlers were the Kemper brothers, who had led the earlier, unsuccessful rebellion. In fact, Reuben Kemper led a small force in an abortive attempt to capture Mobile.

Several accounts show that most of the settlers of West Florida supported the Spanish government. Two Spanish letters in the *Lower Mississippi Data Base*—one from Benjamin Howard to Simon Favre and another from Spanish official Cayetano Perez of Mobile to the Spanish Governor General Vincente Folchs—support this idea. It seems that most of the settlers of the area wanted nothing to do with the rebel government.

Ultimately the Republic of West Florida established a weak government with its capital at St. Francisville, LA. Under the leadership of President Fulmar Skipwith, the little country existed in theory, and to some degree in reality, for seventy-four days from September 23—December 7, 1810. It even created the first lone star flag known as "The Bonnie Blue Flag," which was later used by the Confederacy in the War Between the States.

There is no conclusive evidence that the U. S. government directly supported this rebellion. However, there is *speculation* that there was some "behind the scenes" involve-

ment. In any event the United States profited from the uprising. William C. C. Claiborne, former governor of the Mississippi Territory and present governor of the Louisiana Territory, was sent by President Madison to take possession of the territory, and on December 6, 1810, St. Francisville was taken. On December 10, 1810, Baton Rouge was seized, and the two areas were assimilated into the newly formed Orleans Territory.

In 1810 only the portion of West Florida within the present state of Louisiana was seized and later the area between the Mississippi and Pearl Rivers; nonetheless, the lands of the Mississippi Gulf Coast were not included. On April 8, 1812, President James Madison claimed West Florida based on the 1803 Louisiana Purchase from France, to whom Spain had previously relinquished Louisiana. Still, the coastal lands were not included. However, in August 1812 Mississippi Territorial Governor Holmes issued an edict making the entire Mississippi Territorial Gulf Coast one county—Mobile. The area included all of the lands east of the Pearl River, west of the Perdido, and south of the 31st parallel. In December 1812 Mobile County was divided to form two additional counties, Hancock and Jackson. The remainder of West Florida was ceded to the U. S. in 1819 with the Adams-Onís Treaty.

Mississippi entered the Union on December 10, 1817, with Hancock being one of the original counties. Subsequently,

Hancock was later subdivided into the present-day counties of Hancock, Harrison, Jackson, George, Stone, and part of Pearl River.

SOURCES:

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Did You Know This about Hancock County?

By
Scott Bagley

Did you know that one of the most influential and well-known African-American sculptors of the 20th Century was born right here in Hancock County? Richmond Barthe' was born in Bay St. Louis on January 28, 1901, to Richmond Barthe' and Marie Clementine Raboteau. Barthe' never knew his father who died at the age of twenty-two when Richmond was only one month old. As a result his mother

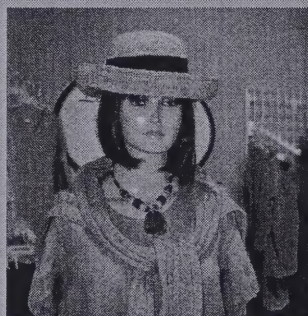
was to play a significant role in his life. She often gave him his favorite toys—a marking pencil and paper—to entertain him during her busy periods while she worked. Very early on Barthe' was fascinated with shapes, especially those of fancy old letters that he saw in the headlines of the New Orleans *Times Picayune*. He also liked comic strip characters found in the same paper. Later Barthe' began drawing people and animals he saw in town and, with his mother, would name them.

With limited schooling at both St. Rose de Lima School and the Valena C. Jones public school in Bay St. Louis, Barthe' eventually made his way to New Orleans where he tried to enroll in the New Orleans art school

but was refused admittance because of his race. This discrimination made him more determined than ever to pursue an artistic career. His determination paid off eventually for in 1924, with the moral and financial support of a Catholic priest, Barthe' was admitted to the Art Institute of Chicago. Here he became interested in sculpting, and that interest became the focus of his art career.

From Chicago, Barthe' went to New York and, within a short time, became one of the most significant black sculptors associated with the Harlem Renaissance. The 1940's were likely Barthe's most productive and successful period. He received many awards including being elected to the American

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Academy of Arts and Letters, the first black sculptor to achieve this honor.

From New York Barthe' made his way to Jamaica where he made his home allowing his work to pass into relative obscurity in the United States, but he continued to have a successful career in both Jamaica and Europe. Social and political problems in Jamaica prompted Barthe's move to Italy and later to Switzerland. Eventually he returned to live in California where his final works were created. Maintaining a volitary but productive lifestyle, Barthe' was occasionally visited by Bay St. Louis family and friends with whom he maintained close relationships.

Richmond Barthe' died on March 6, 1989, in Berkley, California. His ashes were scattered over the Pacific Ocean. A memorial mass for Barthe' was held at St. Rose de Lima Church, Bay St. Louis, on April 6, 1989.

There is currently an exhibit of Barthe's work at the Gallery of African-American Art at the Ohr-O'Keefe Museum in Biloxi. The exhibit will continue through June 12, 2012.

SOURCE:

Lewis, Ph. D. *Two Sculptors Two Eras*. Los Angeles, CA: Samella Lewis and Landau/Travelling Exhibitions, 1992.

The Installation of the 2011 Board of Directors

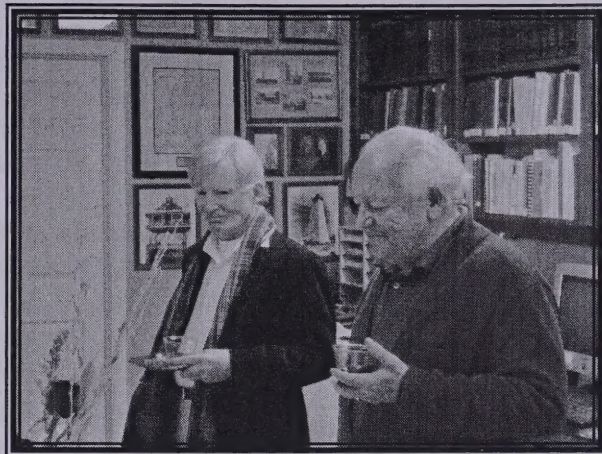
The annual Christmas Tea with the installation of the 2011 Board of Directors was held on Thursday afternoon, December 9, from 3:00—5:00 P. M. After a few brief remarks by Charles Gray, the Executive Director of the Hancock County Historical Society, the Board of Directors took the oath of office. Serving on the 2011 board are Jackie Allain, president; Betty Krieger, second



2011 Board of Directors

Front row L. to R.—Ellis Cuevas, Member at Large; Betty Krieger, Second Vice President; Jackie Allain, President; Scott Bagley, Treasurer; Charles Gray, Executive Director; Back row L. to R.—Jerry Zimmerman, Historian; Pat Fuchs, Publicity Chairperson

vice president; Scott Bagley, treasurer; Beth Weidlich, secretary; Pat Fuchs, publicity chairperson; Jerry Zimmerman, historian; and Ellis Cuevas, board member at large. We are in need of a first vice president. If you are interested in serving in this capacity, please call the office at 467-4090.

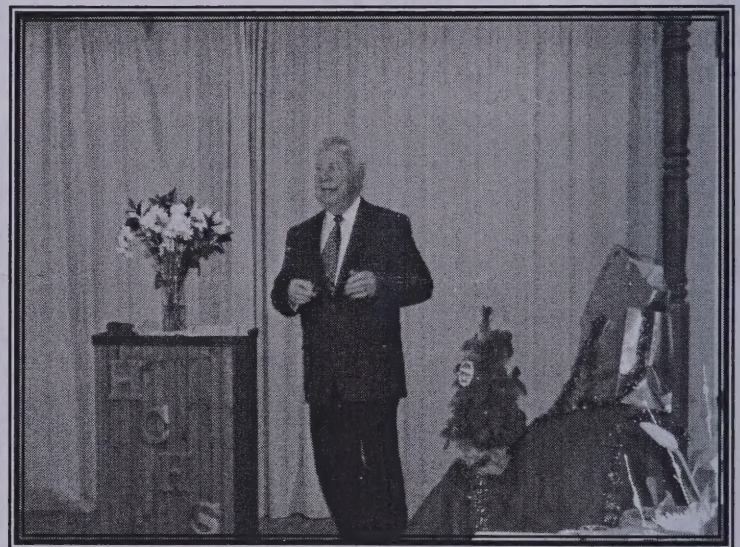


Hugh Stephenson (L.) and Russell Guerin (R.) reacquainting themselves at the tea.

SNAPSHOTS FROM THE CHRISTMAS TEA



Pat Fuchs (L.) and Shirley Blankenship (R.) enjoying the camaraderie of the tea.



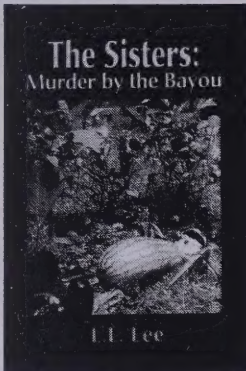
Charles Gray greeting guests at the tea



Jamie Ellis (L.) and Sandra Bagley (R.)—Did Charles say something funny?



L. to R.—Doris Jendusa, Barbara Warner, Louis Fuchs, and Pat Fuchs listening to Charles' remarks.



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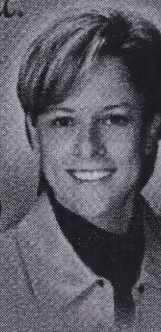
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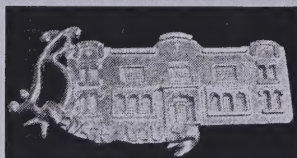
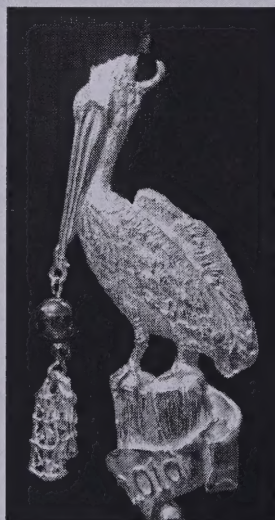
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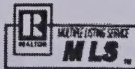
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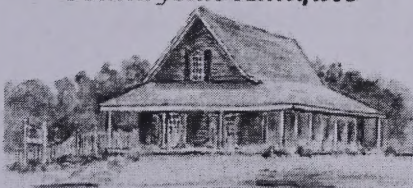
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